

“To the Pure, All Things Are Pure”
 Sermon for 3 May 2015
 Texts: Matthew 5:8, Titus 1:10-15¹

Unto the pure all things *are* pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving *is* nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. KJV

To the pure everything is pure; but to the polluted and unbelieving nothing is pure, but on the contrary their very minds and consciences are polluted. WEYMOUTH

To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. ESV

Here we find, in diverse translations, three different words for the condition of mind and conscience, **for the impure and unbelieving**: defiled, polluted and corrupted. None of them are good. Now the sixth beatitude reads: **Blessed are the pure in heart, they shall see God**. I raise four questions this morning: 1. Do the pure in heart even exist? 2. How does one become pure in heart? 3. Is this a restoration, or a new creation by faith in Jesus Christ? For what we read, in each beatitude is a desirable and attainable condition. If people cannot become pure in heart, or be pure in heart *it is all useless and impossible. Why would Jesus even bring it up?* 4. An ancillary issue, for me, relates to the sliming, polluting and defiling of the mind and conscience which does occur *and its removal/eradication*. For it would appear, without purification, cleansing and clearing, no one should ever attain the blessing herein named!

1 Titus 1:10 For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.[a] 11 They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. 12 One of the Cretans,[b] a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.”[c] 13 This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, 14 not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. 15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. 16 They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. ESV

Footnotes:

(a) Titus 1:10 Or especially those of the circumcision

(b) Titus 1:12 Greek One of them

(c) Titus 1:12 Probably from Epimenides of Crete

Let's get started. After last week's question, "Why do people do such wicked things?" I wanted to launch into a presentation on depravity. But I held back, but our arrival at the sixth beatitude, opens the door for a proper discussion of total depravity. Some modern people think total depravity is a relic from a bygone past. We have progressed beyond that to belief in the essential goodness of man. Currently we ascribe to the view, culturally speaking, that man is basically good and that it is other factors (society, social circumstances, family life or ill-luck) disfigure him. Let's leave aside, for the moment, the irresponsibility that social causation and blame-shifting breeds in our impure hearts. Instead, let's assume that we sin because of a prior condition of moral corruption. We harbor an inherited corruption in a damaged world and that in this degenerated state, things are thoroughly perverted. Something has occurred to the original goodness—namely, the rebellion of our in the sin of Adam and Eve. ***In Adam's fall, we fell all*** we read in the New England Primer's alphabet.

Total depravity, properly defined, is a biblical truth. But, due the baggage it has gathered since the Reformation, we might find pervasive depravity, or radical depravity more easy to understand! To assert that man is totally depraved does not mean every man is as bad as he can be or that his every deed is entirely, or perfectly evil. *Rather total depravity means that our moral corruption affects our entire being, our minds, our bodies and, our wills!* Human imperfection even extends to our sinning. We are rather like the inmate who expends his time in jail considering how to pull off the "perfect crime." They all believe that "only the stupid get caught," over-looking their own condition! If I could only pull it off, without detection or consequence, then I would be really something—I would get away with something! I would do it my way. So, the corrupt heart escalates the risk almost daring the authorities to catch us at it and, could it be, wanting to be caught, stopped and hindered from doing it *all at the same time*. Testing the authorities, taunting God and pushing the boundaries, these are the machinations of the totally depraved. The game is rather like a cosmic run of "hide and seek."

Before we get too far down the road, we should clarify what total depravity is not:

1. It is not the assertion that the image of God in which we were created has been completely lost, *rather it is defaced, disfigured or distorted*. In our entire being, we are morally damaged.
2. Despite our depravity, we still retain some knowledge of the person, will and purposes of God. *We are responsible and without excuse*. However, if God does not intervene, our proclivity to sin leads us to reject God's truth in favor of our own futile speculations. We know enough to hate God, and elect hostility towards His perfect will.
3. Total depravity does not mean we have no conscience at all! We are not insensible to good and evil, even in the haze of values obfuscation that describes our culture (calling good evil, and evil good; asserting that only those who claim to be right are wrong; blatant relativism). We have a conscience, but choose to ignore it.
4. Total depravity does not preclude us from demonstrable virtue. *But establishes that the good we might attain to is not motivated by a genuine faith in, or love for God. **The virtuous man is failing to glory God in every thought, word and deed because his***

corrupt heart prefers a please-able self, or the applause of man to divine rewards.

5. Total depravity does not mean “we are as immoral as we could be, or that men are equally immoral, or that anyone indulges in every form of evil that exists.” (Washer, p.117) It means we have an inclination towards evil, hated rebellion and defiance. We are all capable of unspeakable wickedness—despite not having done it yet. Moral corruption is rather like the physical law of entropy—that is, a momentum towards greater depravity, deeper sin, ever worsening corruption *unless God intervenes beyond the common grace which restrains evil—or brings life out of death and decline.* 6. Total depravity does not mean anyone lacks the capacity, or faculties to seek, know, love and obey God! We are not victims, unable to obey. Our inner criminal chooses not to do what is right, regardless of cost and consequence. We have an intellect, will and ability to choose but until, and unless our inner defilement is addressed our judgment is skewed in a sinful direction. The habit of rebellion is hard to break. It is not that we *cannot* submit ourselves to God; it is that we *will not*. The question is directly this, what will it take for us to abandon our ill will and to take up a good will. How can we overcome our hostility to God?

Do the pure in heart even exist?

The answer is “yes.” God has not created us sinful with no remedy, or way of escape. Sin is an universal condition, but a remedial one. This is true both in the case of **being born in sin** and in the case of being defiled by abuse. When we are sinned against, the overt sin is only part of the problem. The impurity of heart in the perpetrator is inflicted on, introduced into the victim. Those who are sexually abused are exposed to awful things: lies about who they are, what they are here for, why it is their fault that this happened, false claims of helplessness (I can’t help myself, you made me do this) and wicked assertions about the nature of love and healthy relationships. Relational abuse and emotional trauma can follow the same script, written in hell published on earth. There is healing for betrayal, abandonment and broken trust. The impurity of heart, either in the abuser, or in his/her victim, can be cleansed by the application of Christ’s cleansing blood, and by the Word of truth. For the abuser genuine repentance, and a retreat from sinning are both necessary to the purification process. He must confess as sin what is sin and see the blackness of his heart and ask God to eradicate the ill will, the hostility towards God at the root. The victim must conscientiously remove layer upon layer of guilt, shame and defilement. And by faith receive the forgiveness of sin acquired by the work of the Cross.

How does one become pure in heart?

We covered some of this just above. But the extension of this grace takes us to the beautiful word “justified.” We achieve purity by the declaration of God. We are declared according to the benefits of the cross which are received by faith. *By this we are no longer counted, or reckoned as sinners.* Being **justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.** (Romans 3:25) The absolute moral perfections of our Lord Jesus are attributed to us. Our sins, past, present and future,

are forgiven and will not be drawn up in the last day, before the bar of God. Therefore we have the legal standing before the throne of God of those who are pure in heart. We attain the full benefits of our obedient Lord who loved the Lord our God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength *which we could never, on our own, do*. He glorifies us and we, on His behalf, are now treated as the righteous. Christ grants us peace with God, an imputed righteousness so that we stand as “the pure in heart.”

Is this a restoration, or a new creation by faith?

If the fatal flaw induced by sin is taken away, things are by redemption as if they never were. Everything the believer has before God he only has in Christ. Jesus is more than all we need, He is all we have. I prefer to reserve new creation to our resurrection lives and the bodies we acquire then so I lean towards restoration: our purity is restored and our hope is secured. It is nothing we have done, no merit of our own. It is the free gift of God.

Eradication of depravity—is it possible?

Again, the answer is “yes.” **For we have the mind of Christ.** Impure thoughts do not flow from a pure mind. The carnal mind is eradicated in true conversion. We no longer believe we are the center of the universe, or that it is all about us.